

MONUMENTS OF CULTURE

The Kazanluk Tomb
The Madara Horseman
The Boyana Church
The Rock-cut Churches
of Ivanovo



LYUDMIL ANGELOV

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Monuments, Included in UNESCO's World
Heritage List /Luxor, October 26, 1979 /

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The Convention Concerning the Protection of the World Cultural and Natural Heritage adopted by UNESCO in 1972 and having come into effect in December 1975 laid the beginning of a new kind of international cooperation in an endeavour to preserve unique natural sights and cultural monuments of world significance.

It is for the first time that those treasures created by man and nature which are of exceptional universal value have become the object of an international agreement and are summed up under the term 'world heritage'. One of the foremost tasks facing the International Committee set up to implement the Convention in practice was the drawing up of a List of World Heritage.

All states retain their sovereign rights upon the listed monuments. Moreover they are not exempt from the care needed for their preservation, on the contrary, they assume ever greater obligations as regards keeping them in good state. The respective governments may receive significant specialized assistance from the World Heritage Fund for every monument internationally acknowledged as being of world value.

It is only natural that a monument thus distinguished cannot but evoke a strong feeling of national pride in its country. At the same time the very fact that one document includes internationally acknowledged monuments of world value created by different peoples is an eloquent confirmation of Georgi Dimitrov's famous statement: 'In the sphere of culture there are no small or big nations as regards talent. There are no superior or inferior nations. Every nation, no matter how small, is capable of contributing its own values to the common treasure-store of culture.'

In our time the protection of the world cultural and national heritage is a problem whose tackling depends, above all, on the governments themselves.

In socialist Bulgaria the law on cultural monuments and museums stipulates that all cultural property is a national asset and enjoys the protection of the state.

The overall activities encompassing the tracing, studying, popularizing, research, design, conservation of cultural monuments and other related works is concentrated within the specialized state body – the National Institute for Monuments of Culture. Its main objective is to preserve the cultural and historical heritage in the Bulgarian lands for the coming generations. The institute which has been in existence for more than 25 years has a staff of 1,800. As a

result of its activities, over 33,000 archaeological, architectural, historical and artistic monuments have been made known and put under the protection of the state.

They date back to different epochs and are the 'live' witnesses of the history of the Bulgarian lands.

Located at a major crossroads between Europe and Asia these lands have been inhabited since antiquity and were crossed and conquered by different peoples over the centuries. Information about the earliest inhabitants – the Thracians – has been furnished by their tombs and gold treasures. The open dwellings and sanctuaries dating to the 7th and 6th centuries B.C. , statues of Apollo and other deities, tombstones and exquisite ceramic objects provide eloquent data about the Greeks and their colonies on the Black Sea coast. The ruins of Roman towns are reminiscent of a long-lasting Roman rule.

During the 7th century the Slavs settled permanently followed somewhat later by the Proto-Bulgarians. In 681 the two ethnic groups founded the Bulgarian state. From the first capitals of Pliska and later of Preslav come the proper Bulgarian monuments: churches decorated with fine murals, icons, manuscript books with exquisite miniatures and illuminations.

Unfortunately most of them had been completely destroyed – in 1396 the Ottoman Turks conquered Bulgaria; a period of nearly five-centuries of foreign bondage set in.

Among the monuments which have survived through the centuries Bulgaria has chosen and proposed four unique ones: the Kazanluk Tomb, the Madara Horseman, the Boyana Church and the rock-cut churches near the village of Ivanovo. These have been approved by the International Commission and included in the List of World Heritage.

The present publication is not a scientific and research study. By means of a popular presentation it makes an attempt at providing an answer to the question what is unique and inimitable in each of the four monuments thus qualifying them for being of world value.

The booklet has been written especially for the foreign reader but is also designed for all who are interested in the best achievements of art and culture in the Bulgarian lands.

The Kazanluk Tomb

The famous Kazanluk Tomb is for the time being the only Thracian tomb in the world whose structure and murals are in a good state of preservation. The exceptional quality of its artistic decoration gives us an inkling of the highest achievements of Thracian art.

It was unearthed by chance in the spring of 1944. Archaeologists dated it at about B.C. late 4th or early 3rd century. It is obviously the tomb of a rich Thracian, presumably someone of the suite of the king of the Odrissae, Seuthes III.

The Kazanluk Tomb belongs to the round domed tombs so characteristic of Thracian architecture. It consists of three premises — a vaulted brick funeral chamber, a narrow passage (dromos) and a rectangular antechamber. It is the oldest tomb of those built of bricks.

The ancient Thracians believed in afterlife and worshipped the dead. The Thracian aristocracy built for themselves tombs — their eternal dwellings. According to some unproved data the dead man's wife and often his horse as well were buried with him. His armour, armaments and numerous most diverse artistic and household objects were always laid beside him, to accompany the deceased in his afterlife. The interior of the tombs was sometimes decorated with murals.

Very few insignificant objects have been found in the Kazanluk Tomb which attests that it had been plundered probably as far back as antiquity. On the other hand the murals which are the only ones well preserved on the Balkan Peninsula are genuine masterpieces.

The attention of visitors is immediately arrested by the multi-figural composition 'Funeral Feast with a Procession'. The central figures — a rich Thracian and his wife are portrayed opposite the entrance of the vaulted funeral chamber.

The young man crowned with a funeral laurel wreath is seated in a throne. His face and his whole figure emanate calmness and solemnity. His beautiful wife is beside him. Her graceful delicate figure, the shape of her body outlined under the transparent folds of her expensive garment emphasize her beauty and femininity. Her head is slightly bowed down and the expression of her face is one of deep grief. Her thoughtful black eyes are dimmed by sadness for she is bidding farewell to her husband.

Her complex emotional state has been grasped and depicted

by the unknown painter with an exceptional artistry. Even in a single gesture – her right hand with slender fingers reposing affectionately upon her husband's left hand – the painter has succeeded in portraying the intimate and tender feelings binding the spouses and in emphasizing the inner harmony between them.

On either side of the two central figures is the procession and the feast – servants, musicians, young men and grooms.

Of interest is the rear scene of the procession – featuring a young man barely reigning in the strong and high-spirited horses. His stalwart body, the swing of his right hand, his flowing hair are an embodiment of youthful vigour. He stares lovingly at the horses entrusted to him which is in contrast with the sad countenances of the remaining figures in the procession.

The scene 'Funeral Feast with a Procession' has been executed in the spirit of the best traditions of Hellenistic art. The subtlety of composition, rhythm of movement, balance and harmony between the graceful and calm movements and gestures of the people and the impetuous, unruly impulsiveness of the horses – all this is reminiscent of the classical ancient models.

Yet the artistic solution of the funeral scene is original and unique. Without in the least ignoring the monumentality, the unknown painter had perceived and depicted in the images of the Thracian nobleman and his wife their individual dramatic state of mind. The psychological characteristics is amazingly truthful and accurate for in that moment of mourning the two of them are tender and loving to each other.

A novel element in the scene are the numerous figures taking part in the procession. What is novel is their attitude towards the portrayed event. They are living participants in the ritual rather than outside onlookers.

The personal creative approach of the painter to the imagery can be perceived on some other of the frescos. He was obviously an exceptionally gifted artist and sought for solutions of his own other than the ready-made patterns.

The artistic impact of the scene 'Chariot Racing' is most powerful. The fast, dashing race is dynamically depicted – horses, people and chariots are all caught in a dizzy vortex. Scenes of horse races portrayed with such artistic power and beauty are rarely to be met with in art for their execution requires great artistic skill.

On one wall in the passage the painter has portrayed the combat between two infantrymen. In the rear are the rest of the warriors armed and in fighting trim awaiting the outcome of the duel. This is an illustration of a subject well-known from ancient times – instead of a battle between two armies – a duel between distinguished warriors is depicted and the victory of the one means a victory of his army.

On the opposite wall the two enemy armies are portrayed during a friendly meeting. Amazing is the skill of the painter to con-

vey the different psychological states of the warriors in two entirely different situations – a battle and a peaceful meeting. Executed with easy strokes in fighting postures, in movement or in expectation, the figures of the warriors and their horses are compositionally linked in a rhythm strictly subordinated to the basic idea of the whole composition.

The murals in the Kazanluk Tomb by an unknown but extraordinarily gifted artist (according to some the work of several painters) are one of the sublimities of the art of the Thracian state which was in its time one of the most culturally advanced countries in the Mediterranean basin. The frescos are a vivid example of a creative borrowing from the ancient heritage in creating original works in the spirit of the Thracian culture, Thracian way of life, customs and mores.

In the Kazanluk Tomb the traditional ancient ritual scenes show deep insight into the essence of human soul which further enhances their humanitarian and artistic significance.



The murals in the vaulted chamber

Funeral Procession with a Feast – central part



The deceased spouses



The world in the past

The deceased



The deceased Thracian lady



Detail of the murals in the vaulted chamber



Detail of the murals in the vaulted chamber

Grooms with saddled horses



Detail of the murals in the vaulted chamber



The Cupbearer



Servant with a tray



Detail of the murals in the vaulted chamber



Detail of the murals in the vaulted chamber



Figure of a person in traditional attire

Person with a staff

Person with a staff



Servant with a casket

Servant with a veil



Detail of the murals in the vaulted chamber

The quadriga coachman



Fragment: the quadriga coachman



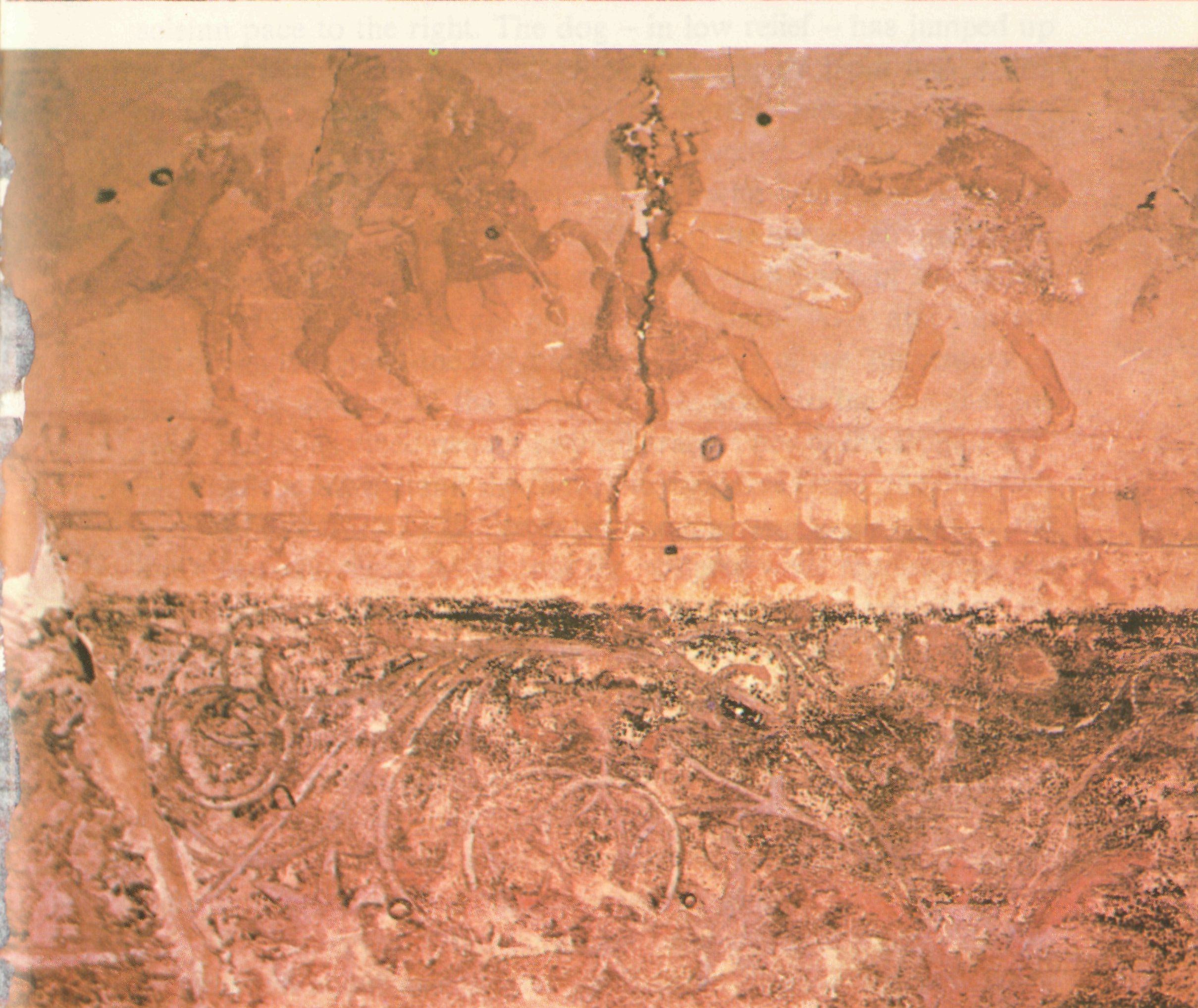
The quadriga horses

Decorative elements in the vaulted chamber



Fragment: Chariot racing

The eastern frieze in the dromos



Fragment: Chariot racing

The western frieze in the dromos

The Madara Horseman

In Northeastern Bulgaria near the village of Madara, district of Shoumen, at a height of 23 metres from the foundation of a vertical rock there is a big rock-cut relief known as the Madara Horseman, by an unknown sculptor.

The relief which is 2.60 metres high and 3.10 metres wide is cut out into gritstone. This had facilitated the sculptor in modelling the images. However, the rock of this kind is more sensitive to erosion which in the course of centuries has damaged the sculpted figures and particularly the inscriptions on either side and below them.

The composition executed with easy and enviable masterly skill, shows a horseman, a dog and a lion. The central figure of the horseman is almost life-sized. The horse is taking a slow, calm and solemn pace to the right. The dog – in low relief – has jumped up with its tongue hanging out. Under the horse's front legs a lion stabbed with a spear is lying. Here the horse is not just a friend of man as in ancient art but a symbol of victory over a foe.

When was the relief hewn out and who was depicted in it ?

A number of characteristic details of the horseman – his outer knee-length garment, the short spear, the high back of the saddle and above all, the stirrup, popular in Central Asia and Eastern Europe at the end of the 6th and the beginning of the 7th century as well as the absence of the antique cloak, attest to the fact that the relief can be ascribed neither to the Thracian nor to the Roman art.

On the other hand the fact that the horse faces one direction and his head is perpendicular to the body, as well as the shape of the lion's legs and mane testify that the sculptor while representing the man and the animals as they look in life which is typical of ancient art of the Mediterranean region, had been familiar, too, with the more schematic and two-dimensional rendition of forms which was particularly characteristic of the decorative principle of the art of Persia. This plastic peculiarity is to be met with in other monuments of Bulgarian art of that time, too.

These specificities unambiguously support the thesis about the Bulgarian origin of the sculpture and its author.

The preserved Proto-Bulgarian inscriptions in Greek furnish information about events which had taken place at the time when the Bulgarian state was ruled by the khans Tervel (700-721), Kormisosh (721-738) and Omourtag (815-831). The inscriptions are a kind of chronicle. The data furnished by them fill in important gaps

concerning the earliest periods of the history of the Bulgarian state following its foundation in 681.

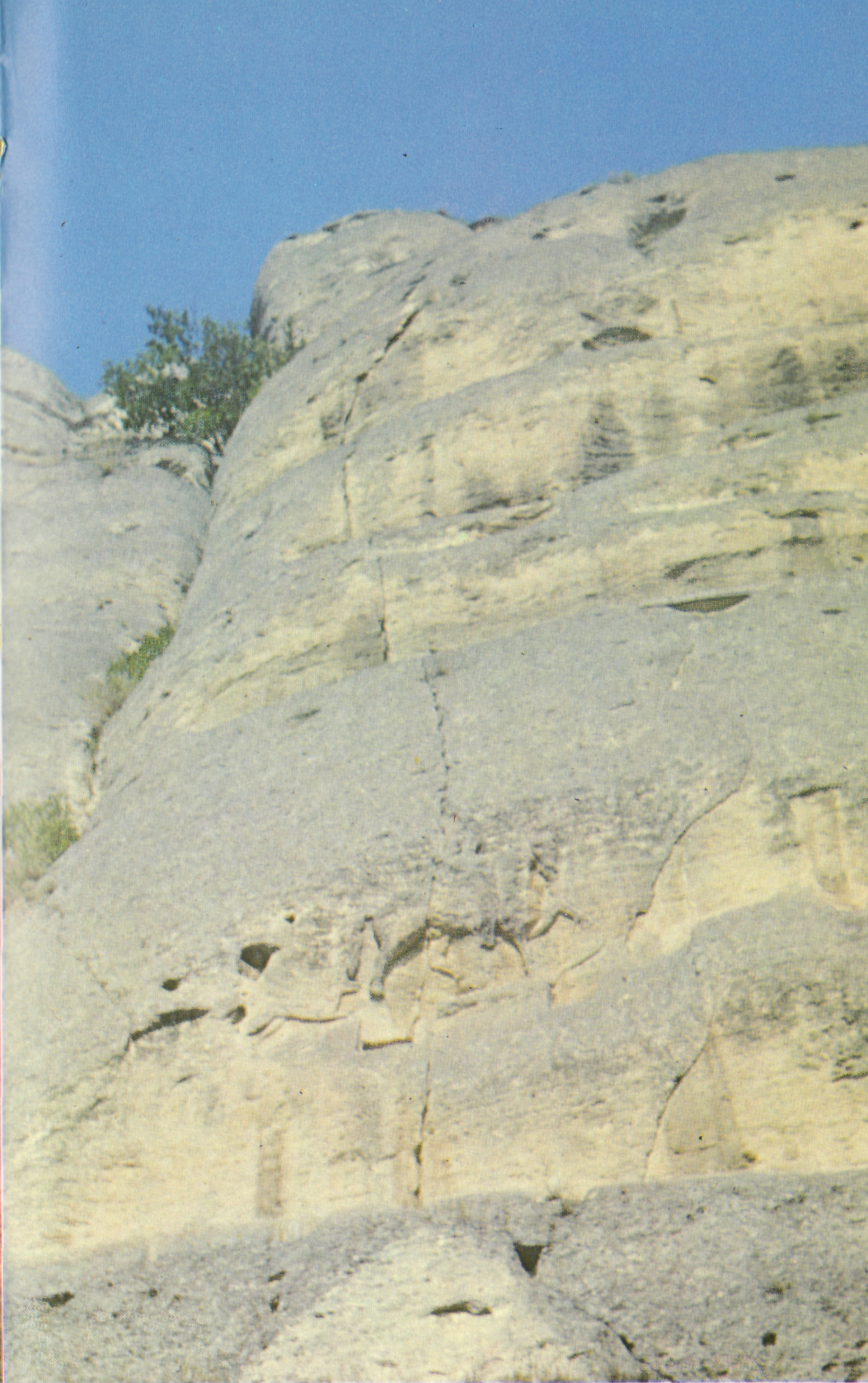
The oldest inscription tells about the assistance the Bulgarian Khan Tervel rendered to the Emperor of Byzantium Justinian II Rhinotmetus in his being restored to the throne. It is a well-known fact from Byzantine chronicles that in 705 the Emperor invited Tervel to Constantinople and conferred on him the title of ceasar. This title was usually awarded to the man second in rank to the emperor. For the first time it was granted to a foreigner. Besides, the Emperor ordered that Khan Tervel be acclaimed together with him.

It is presumed that in the early 8th century the unknown sculptor had immortalized in his work the triumphant Tervel holding the harness in his right hand and a drinking cup in his left one. The solemn pose emphasizes the strength and power of the ruler, the glory and might of the second khan of the young Bulgarian state who had won the respect of the powerful Emperor of Byzantium.

This rock-cut relief is reminiscent of the triumphant scenes depicted in plastic works of the Persian East.

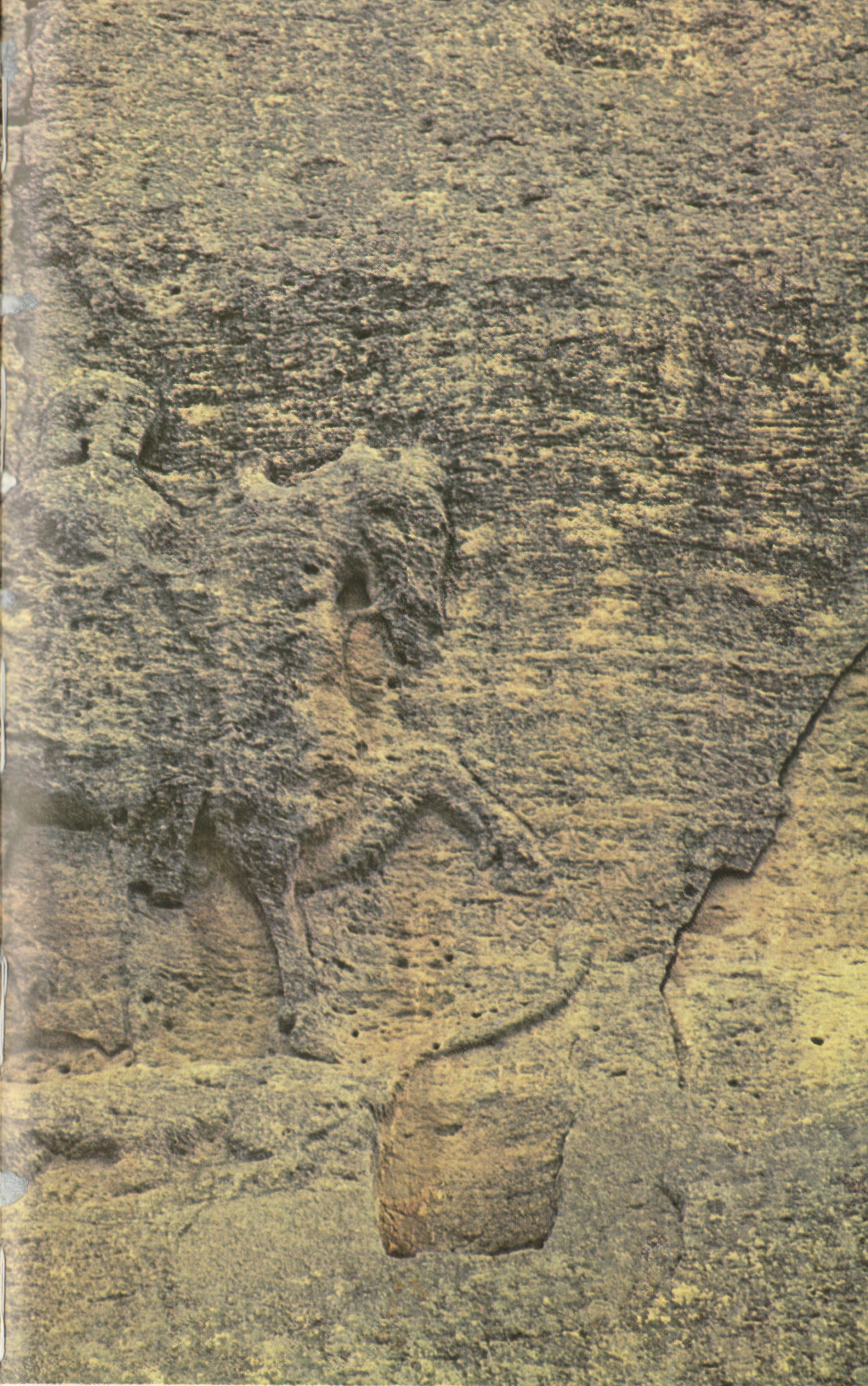
The Madara Horseman is an expression of the typical aspiration of Bulgarian art of that epoch to extoll in artistic images the feats of the mounted warrior.

As a composition and dimensions the Madara Horseman is a unique monument of its kind in Europe. It had been organically linked with the compound of palace buildings erected in Khan Omourtag's time — a felicitous example of synthesis between art, natural environment and architectural ensemble.

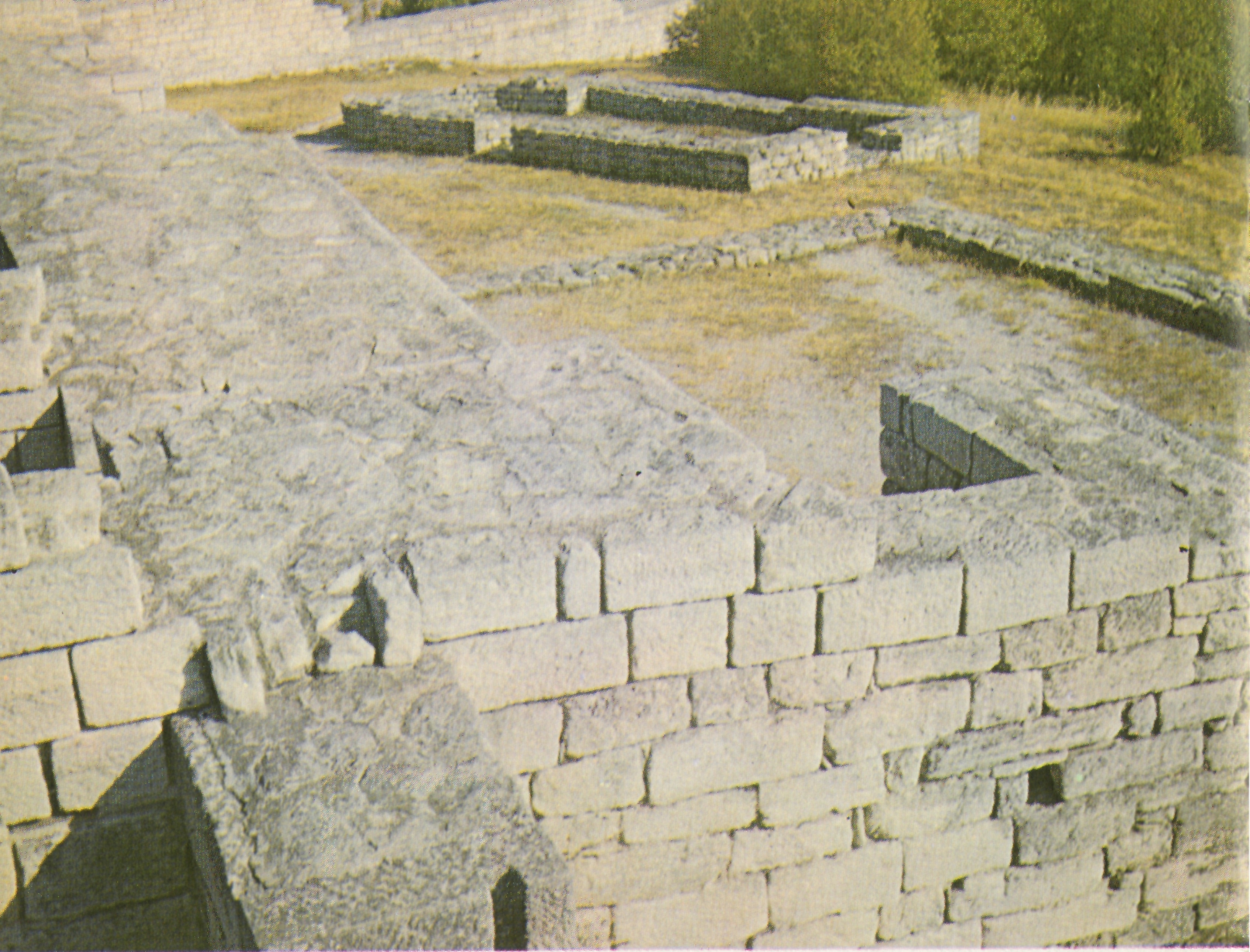


The rock with the Madara Horseman stone relief





There is no repetition even in the numerous reincarnations of Christ.
They are always new, each with its own characteristics, and each
a unique and irreplaceable part of the whole.



Ruins of the fortress near Madara

The Boyana Church

This architectural ensemble situated eight kilometres away from the centre of the capital Sofia is composed of three parts: a crossdomed church dating to the 11th century, a two-storey church of the 13th century and a narthex added at the end of the 19th century.

Its exceptional value as a cultural monument is due, above all, to the famous frescos in its second section painted as the inscription testifies in 1259 .

On first seeing the murals a number of specificities are to be discerned. As regards the arrangement of the religious events, scenes and images in the different parts of the church, one can trace no deviation from mediaeval iconographical tradition, viz. each part of the church with its strictly defined functions had been ornamented with the appropriate scenes and images.

The Boyana painter (according to some scholars it was a group of painters) adhered to some other traditional idioms of the system of decoration of mediaeval pictorial art — the portrayed scenes and characters are arranged in three horizontal rows in a strictly determined iconographical order. At the same time, however, the Boyana master had succeeded in achieving a rare plastic unity of architectural structure and the decoration of the building, notably the space, shapes and the planes of the walls. Most important of all, the characters and scenes are portrayed so realistically that their human touch and vitality associate them with the earliest manifestations of the Renaissance in Europe.

Most striking to the visitor is the absence of any religious mysticism whatsoever. Instead of the bright azure known from the Byzantine painting in which the Christian canonical images-ideas prevailed, the unknown painter used a splendid background of bluish-black against which full-blooded human figures are depicted.

They are not generalized symbols of the Christian conception of essential human traits represented in a given character which was most often idealized. These are portraits of ordinary earthly human beings. The painter had portrayed them with an insight into their thoughts, feelings and moods and in some of them had even caught the unique individual features of faces known from life.

No repetition can be traced in this gallery of portrayed images. There is no repetition even in the numerous reincarnations of Christ. They are diverse as regards their external characteristics, inner state of mind and accentuated traits of the character and differ a great

deal from the Byzantine canons adopted for each one of the images of Christ.

The twelve-year-old Christ talking with the scribes in the temple is a superb child's image, extremely captivating and rarely to be met with in art. It emanates delicacy and purity combined with clearly expressed depth of soul and sagacity. The image of Christ giving his blessing strikes one not only with its beauty: it reveals noble spirit, human kindness and serenity. Christ of 'The Crucifixion' is a tragic image of a man who writhes with pain in the agony of death.

The originality of each of the images of Christ indisputably proves that the painter had executed the images not by following ready-made patterns but after observations on persons living in the world around him. Moreover, one feels his aspiration to depict the life of Christ in terms of human reality which would make it better understandable to common people.

The portraits of the rest of the saints and the donors, too, show striking individual features and psychological depth.

Most numerous are the images of the Warrior Saints notable for their valour, will-power and reserve. They are dressed in the traditional Bulgarian military uniforms of the day and this together with some other genre details which stood out in mediaeval Bulgarian monumental painting of the 13th and 14th century, testifies to the fact that the Boyana master belonged to the Turnovo School of Arts.

A true masterpiece is the image of the Angel of the scene featuring the 'Annunciation' which captivates with its stance, finesse and beauty, nobility and expressiveness. This image recalls the unique harmony between the physical appearance and spiritual life so typical of the ancient models.

Unique samples of the entire mediaeval art of portrait painting of that time are the full-length portraits of the couples Tsar Konstantin Assen and Queen Irina and of the donors Sebastokrator Kaloyan and his wife Dessislava. Neither their splendid garments nor the distinguishing signs symbolizing their rank have escaped the eye of the painter. The deep insight into their rich spiritual life, the masterly depiction of the intricate nuances of the human soul make the strongest of impressions.

If when painting the scenes with the saints in the church the artist might have been influenced by some images from icons or miniatures, there is no doubt that the portraits of the donors had been painted from life for they have nothing to do with the stock characters of iconography.

There are unifying elements in all the four portraits: the solemn appearance, the peculiar spiritual concentration their faces betray, the markedly individualized features. Tsar Konstantin Assen is a young, stalwart man. The regal self-confidence and

authority can clearly be perceived in his figure and eyes. The portrait of Queen Irina does not show only royal dignity and grandeur but also suggests an inborn self-assurance.

Sebastokrator Kaloyan is serene, reticent, self-confident. The deep and thoughtful eyes of Dessislava look down from a beautiful face lit up by a faint smile. Her whole being gives the impression of exquisiteness, spiritual refinement and pronounced femininity.

These four images reveal the painter's love of man, of youth and beauty. Only an artist who loves life and humankind can grasp and depict the wealth of human sentiments and relationships, prompted by an aspiration for beauty and perfection. And these are Renaissance ideals.

The Boyana Master rejected the canons, the cut-and-dry patterns and achieved a remarkable psychological insight when portraying the images and the scenes. This was something completely unknown to the early mediaeval art.

The profound humanism of the painter is combined with clearly expressed realism and democratism. The Boyana master sought for and found the man in the world around him. The basis of his creative quests is notably the live link with reality. He incarnated his humanistic feelings, his joy and fascination with the world in the images that come to life on the walls of the Boyana Church.

No doubt the unknown painter of Boyana was an exceptionally gifted personality. It is likewise obvious that he had solid training. His art of genius was the fruit of definite social and historical conditions and it synthesizes the most precious values created by the Bulgarian people in their historical and cultural development of that epoch.

A prerequisite for this high spiritual culture was the political and economic upsurge of the country. A Bulgarian School of Literature took shape at the time, books were written and translated. Some of them mainly gospels and lives of saints were richly illustrated. The arts and crafts flourished owing to the intensive construction of palaces and churches. In the capital city of Veliko Turnovo a school of arts was set up whose disciples worked not only in the capital but also in other parts of the country.

Numerous facts prove that the Boyana murals were executed by a talented representative of the Turnovo School of Arts. They are the peak achievement of that school.

The Boyana master possessed an amazing sense of composition and colour and the stroke of his brush was easy and generous. This helped him create impressive psychological portraits and numerous scenes of complex composition.

With the portrayal of living man in art the Boyana church frescos are an early and brilliant anticipation of a new phase in the development of world art.



View of the Boyana Church





The inscription in the narthex

СВѢДАСА ПРѢУНСТЫХНА
ИКОЛЫНСТАГО НЕБЕЛНКА
АКИНТЕЛЕННОНА ТЕМЕ
БОЕНАХ МНОГОДАЖКАА
АТОУАДАУРРА ВНОКЕСТА
КАГО НАГНСА ЖЕСАТЕН
БЛАГОВЕРНЕОЛЬ ПЕРУУ
АЛЬМВЕВЬИРН СОСТААН
САНКТОУ ВЛѢТС



Christ with the Doctors





Detail of Christ with the Doctors



THESE ARE THE
THESE ARE THE



Detail of Christ with the Doctors

Detail of Christ with the Doctors



Christ – Evergetes



The Crucifixion



Detail of the Crucifixion



The Descent into Hell



СВЯТЫ
ЖЕДЪХ
ВАЛЬКО
ГРМДЕ
Г



St Theodor Tiron





The Old Warrior



The Annunciation. Detail



Tsar Konstantin and Queen Irina





The Donors – Sebastokrator Kaloyan and his wife Dessislava





Detsislava. Detail



Sebastokrator Kaloyan. Detail

Հայկական թանգարան • Հայաստանի թանգարան



The Transfiguration. Detail





The Last Supper









The Presentation in the Temple (14th c)

The Rock-cut Churches near the Village of Ivanovo

Some 20 kilometres away from the city of Rouse, near the village of Ivanovo, the picturesque river Roussenski Lom runs through a deep gorge. The cliffs on both sides rise to a height of 100 metres and over. In these inaccessible rocks there are caves which were inhabited in antiquity.

At the end of the 12th century monks began to cut cells, chapels and churches in the rocks and to link them with a whole system of galleries and wooden arcades. The most recent explorations provide testimony of the existence of a whole monasterial compound which is supposed to have been the centre of vigorous cultural and spiritual life.

The churches were decorated with murals most of which were destroyed by landslides.

The famous unique murals dating to the 14th century have been preserved in the Tsurkvata (the church) Cave. In arranging the religious scenes on the walls the Ivanovo painter followed the sequence of the biblical story and at the same time he gave an artistic expression to his own conception about man and the world around him.

It is really amazing for a painter to have had such a broad world outlook in an epoch characterized by the spread of religious mysticism.

Instead of the lifeless dogmatically presented images the anonymous master populated some Gospel scenes like 'The Betrayal of Judas' with naked human bodies. They are strong, muscular, overflowing with beauty and vitality; their postures and gestures are explicitly modelled.

The figures of the atlantes supporting the entablatures of the buildings are portrayed dynamically, with internal tension which was something unfamiliar to the Christian art of that time.

The influence of Hellenistic art here is obvious — the ancient ideal of beauty can be perceived clearly. It was to be revived later in the art of the Renaissance.

An eloquent testimony of the presence of elements typical of ancient painting is the fact that the figures of the Ivanovo murals are comparatively small though executed in their real proportions. They are slightly elongated but slender and are not arranged in a fixed order in space whereas their height is complied with the scope of the landscape and the architectural milieu. The lifelike portrayal of man in proportion to the world around him testifies to the painter's new outlook. To him man was an inseparable part of his environment.

Most of the scenes convey a pronounced dramatic and emotional atmosphere which is due to the artist's extraordinary skill to execute the plastic image in harmony with the inner feelings of man.

Illustrious in this respect is the unique figure of the woman leading the group in the scene 'The Women Uncction Bearers'. Her image is a blend of outward beauty, harmony and emotional tension which is imparted to the other two women of the group, too.

The thorough psychological treatment of the characters, their vitality, varied postures and expressive gestures are in harmony with the rest of the elements included in the portrayal of the event. In contrast to the iconographical schemes applied in previous murals here the buildings, the landscape and the other genre elements represent not only a scenery. Executed in three-dimensional form in accurate proportions and in varied positions they are part of the entire plastic rendition of the scene making a contribution of their own to the dynamics of the Ivanovo murals.

The unknown Ivanovo master had obviously a rare sense of colour for his time. Extraordinary is his gift to evoke emotions through definite colours and colour shades. The fresh soft pastel tones either combined or contrasted account for the particular subtlety and exquisiteness of the frescos.

With all these artistic assets the Ivanovo murals are reminiscent of some miniatures executed by painters of the Turnovo School of Arts. The talented artist of Ivanovo had undoubtedly elaborated further and enriched the trends, progressive for their time, and characteristic of the Bulgarian school of art of the 13th century. He caught and refracted through his individual creative prism the new artistic quests of the first half of the 14th century characteristic of the Paleologue style.



The Valley of the Roussenski Lom River with the Church in the foreground



Exterior of the Church





Interior of the Church

The Betrayal of Judas



The Feet Washing

The Women Carrying Ointments



Judas Returning the Silver Pieces

The Hanging of Judas



John the Baptist brought before Herod

Beheading of John the Baptist



The Sanhedrin Presided by Caiaphas and the Denial of Apostle Peter





The Transfiguration



The Descent into Hell (The Church in Gospodev Dol)



The Advent of the Holy Spirit

The present edition was already at the printer's when it became known that the International Committee has included in the List of World Cultural Heritage and natural beauty spots another four Bulgarian sites: two monuments of culture – the Rila Monastery and the town of Nessebur, and two nature reserves – Pirin mountain and Lake Sreburna.

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Editor of the Bulgarian text: Nikolova-Egert

Translated by M.Benatova

Artist: D.Kartalev

Art editor: S.Pancheva

Photo illustrations: T. Bekyarov, S. Kozhouharov, A. Handjiiski

Photo-editor: T.Bekyarov

Technical Editor: L. Ferdinandov

Proof Reader: V. Vladimirova

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